

CAPSULE SUMMARY

BA-1071

Etzel House

402 ½ Railroad Avenue

East Towson, Baltimore County

Circa 1905

Private

The house at 402 1/2 Railroad Avenue was constructed circa 1905 in the East Towson neighborhood of Baltimore County. The history of this property dates from the purchase of one-and-a-quarter acres of land by Daniel Harris in September 1853. This is believed to be the first documented African-American landholding in Towson, and is among the oldest such ethnic enclave in Baltimore County. Further, manumitted slaves and/or descendents of former slaves, many of who were owned by Charles Ridgely, populated the neighborhood. Hampered by the low economic status of the residents, development in the 19th century was slow, increasing after the turn of the 20th century. The setting of the property, building styles, and construction materials were guided by the limited economic status of the residents and their desire to establish a neighborhood of their own without the assistance of white architects, builders, and craftsmen. By 1927, the community was ninety-five percent improved with single-family dwellings, social buildings, a school, and religious structures. Many of the current homeowners and tenants living in the neighborhood are descendents of the first African-American residents.

The Etzel House is sited close to Railroad Avenue on a level grassy lot amongst mature trees and shrubs. The one-story, two-bay vernacular dwelling, built circa 1905, has a shotgun form. The wood frame structural system is clad in weatherboard and supported by a solid concrete block foundation. The off-center entry features a replacement one-leaf wood paneled door shaded by a shed roof supported on square wood posts and brackets. A wood double-hung sash window with 6/6-lights is set in a square-edge wood surround. There is a wood louvered vent in the gable peak. The house has overhanging eaves with exposed raking wood rafters and a front gable roof covered with asphalt shingles. There is one central-interior stuccoed chimney.



Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. BA-1071

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic Etzel House
other

2. Location

street and number 402 1/2 Railroad Avenue not for publication
city, town Towson vicinity
county Baltimore County

3. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name John F., Joseph J., & George F. Etzel
street and number 1108 Valewood Road telephone Not Available
city, town Baltimore state MD zip code 21286

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Baltimore County Courthouse tax map and parcel: 70, 324
city, town Towson liber 5432 folio 158

5. Primary Location of Additional Data

- ☐ Contributing Resource in National Register District
☐ Contributing Resource in Local Historic District
☐ Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
☐ Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
☐ Recorded by HABS/HAER
☐ Historic Structure Report or Research Report
☐ Other

6. Classification

Category	Ownership	Current Function	Resource Count	
			Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce/trade	1	buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> defense		sites
<input type="checkbox"/> site		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> domestic		structures
<input type="checkbox"/> object		<input type="checkbox"/> education		objects
		<input type="checkbox"/> funerary	1	0 Total
		<input type="checkbox"/> government		
		<input type="checkbox"/> health care		
		<input type="checkbox"/> industry		
		<input type="checkbox"/> landscape		
		<input type="checkbox"/> recreation/culture		
		<input type="checkbox"/> religion		
		<input type="checkbox"/> social		
		<input type="checkbox"/> transportation		
		<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress		
		<input type="checkbox"/> unknown		
		<input type="checkbox"/> vacant/not in use		
		<input type="checkbox"/> other:		
			Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory	
			1	

7. Description

Inventory No. BA-1071

Condition

<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> altered

Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The Etzel House is sited close to Railroad Avenue on a level grassy lot amongst mature trees and shrubs. The one-story, two-bay vernacular dwelling, built circa 1905, has a shotgun form. The wood frame structural system is clad in weatherboard and supported by a solid concrete block foundation. The off-center entry features a replacement one-leaf wood paneled door shaded by a shed roof supported on square wood posts and brackets. A wood double-hung sash window with 6/6-lights is set in a square-edge wood surround. There is a wood louvered vent in the gable peak. The house has overhanging eaves with exposed raking wood rafters and a front gable roof covered with asphalt shingles. There is one central-interior stuccoed chimney.

8. Significance

Inventory No. BA-1071

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion	
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science	
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history	
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime industry	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation	
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:	

Specific dates 1905 ca.

Architect/Builder Unknown

Construction dates 1905 ca.

Evaluation for:

☐ National Register

☐ Maryland Register

☒ not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance reports, complete evaluation on a DOE Form - see manual.)

The house at 402 1/2 Railroad Avenue was constructed circa 1905 in the East Towson neighborhood of Baltimore County. East Towson is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history, specifically the pre-Civil War development of an African-American neighborhood in a predominately white community. The history of this property dates from the purchase of one-and-a-quarter acres of land by Daniel Harris in September 1853. This is believed to be the first documented African-American landholding in Towson, and is among the oldest such ethnic enclave in Baltimore County. Further, manumitted slaves and/or descendants of former slaves, many of who were owned by Charles Ridgely, populated the neighborhood. Hampered by the low economic status of the residents, development in the 19th century was slow, increasing after the turn of the 20th century. The setting of the property, building styles, and construction materials were guided by the limited economic status of the residents and their desire to establish a neighborhood of their own without the assistance of white architects, builders, and craftsmen. By 1927, the community was ninety-five percent improved with single-family dwellings, social buildings, a school, and religious structures. Many of the current homeowners and tenants living in the neighborhood are descendants of the first African-American residents.

East Towson as a whole is representative of an important phase of architectural development in Baltimore County, illustrating the dilution of popular architectural styles to more efficiently meet the needs of the neighborhood, and the builders' untrained abilities to execute the fashionable ornamentation. Thus, East Towson provided lower cost housing in a more suburban neighborhood, rather than the urban setting their economic status typically perpetuated.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No. BA-1071

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property 0.16 acres

Acreage of historical setting 0.16 acres

Quadrangle name Towson

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

The Etzel House is located at 402 1/2 Railroad Avenue in East Towson in the Ninth District of Baltimore County. It has historically been associated with tax map 70, parcel 324,

11. Form Prepared By

name/title K. Baynard, J. Bunting & J. Riggle, Architectural Historians

organization E.H.T. Traceries

date 10/9/01

street and number 1121 5th Street NW

telephone 202/393-1199

city or town Washington

state DC zip code 20001

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
DHCD/DHCP
100 Community Place
Crownsville MD 21032
410-514-7600

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. BA-1071

Name Etzel House

Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 1

Atlas of Baltimore County, Maryland. Philadelphia, PA: G. M. Hopkins, 1877.

Baltimore County Historic Inventory.

Brooks, Neal A. and Eric G. Rockel. A History of Baltimore County. Towson, MD: Friends of the Towson Library, Inc., 1979.

Map of Baltimore County. Philadelphia, PA: G. W. Bromley, 1915.

Scharf, J. Thomas. History of Baltimore City and County From the Earliest Period to the Present Day: Including Biographical Sketches of Their Representative Men. Philadelphia, PA: Louis H. Everts, 1881. Reprinted by Higginson Book Company, Salem, MA.

Sidney, J. C. Map of the City and County of Baltimore, Maryland, from Original Surveys. Baltimore, MD: James M. Stephens, 1850

East Towson: Planimetric Data

BA-1071
Etzel House
402 1/2 Railroad Avenue
East Towson
Baltimore County



Prepared by:
Baltimore County Office of Planning
401 Bosley Avenue
Towson, Maryland 21204
June, 2001



Scale
1 inch = 200 feet
1:2400
100 0 100 200 Feet

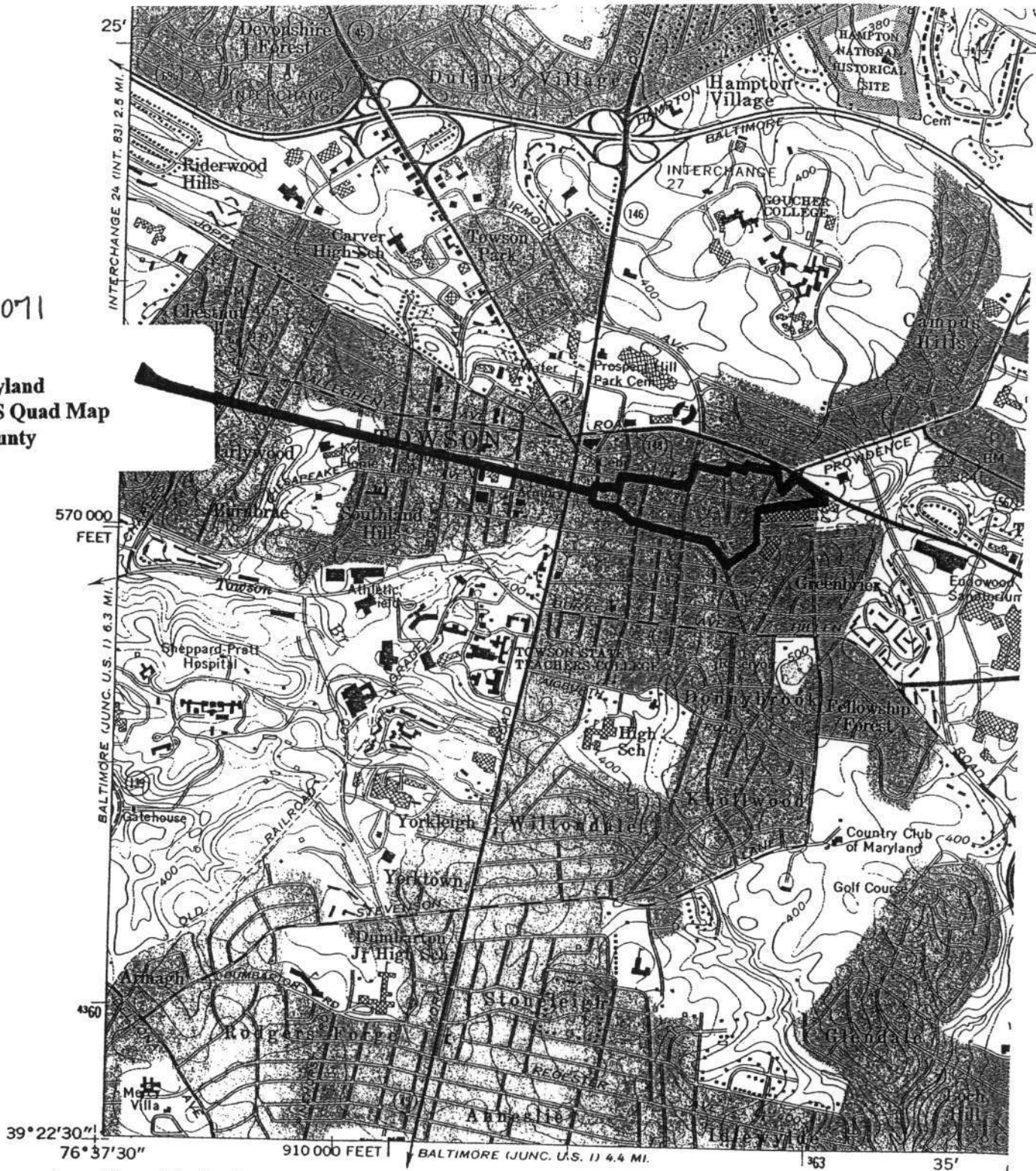
Legend

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Study Area Boundary | Hydrographic Features |
| Paved Roads | Buildings |
| Unpaved Roads | Vegetation |
| Paved Parking / Driveways | |

Data Sources:
Planimetric Data: Baltimore County OIT GIS Services Unit (1:2400)
Parcel Boundaries: Baltimore County OIT GIS
Services Unit (1:2400)
Study Area: Baltimore County Office of Planning (1:2400)
Coordinate System:
- Maryland State Plane: NAD83/91 Horizontal Datum
Elevations in Feet: NAVD83 Vertical Datum
Date of Data Capture: March 1996
Scale of Data Capture: 1" = 100'

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East Towson
Towson, Maryland
Towson USGS Quad Map
Baltimore County



(BALTIMORE WEST)
5862 SW

Mapped by the Army Map Service
Edited and published by the Geological Survey

Control by USGS, USC&GS, USCE, and Maryland
Bureau of Control Surveys and Maps

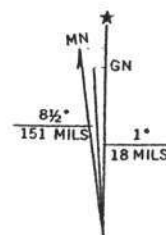
Culture and drainage in part compiled from aerial photographs
taken 1943. Topography by planetable surveys 1944
Culture revised by the Geological Survey 1957

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Maryland coordinate system
1000-metre Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 18, shown in blue

Red tint indicates areas in which only
landmark buildings are shown

Revisions shown in purple compiled by the Geological Survey from
aerial photographs taken 1966 and 1974. This information not
field checked

Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas



UTM GRID AND 1974 MAGNETIC NORTH
DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET



BA-1071

ETZEL HOUSE

402 1/2 RAILROAD AVENUE

BALTIMORE COUNTY, MD

TRACERIES

10/01

MD SHPO

NORTHWEST CORNER

1 OF 3



BA-1071

ETZEL HOUSE

402 1/2 RAILROAD AVENUE

BALTIMORE COUNTY, MD

TRACERIES

10/01

MD SHPD

WEST ELEVATION

2 OF 3



BA-1071

ETZEL HOUSE

402 1/2 RAILROAD AVENUE

BALTIMORE COUNTY, MD

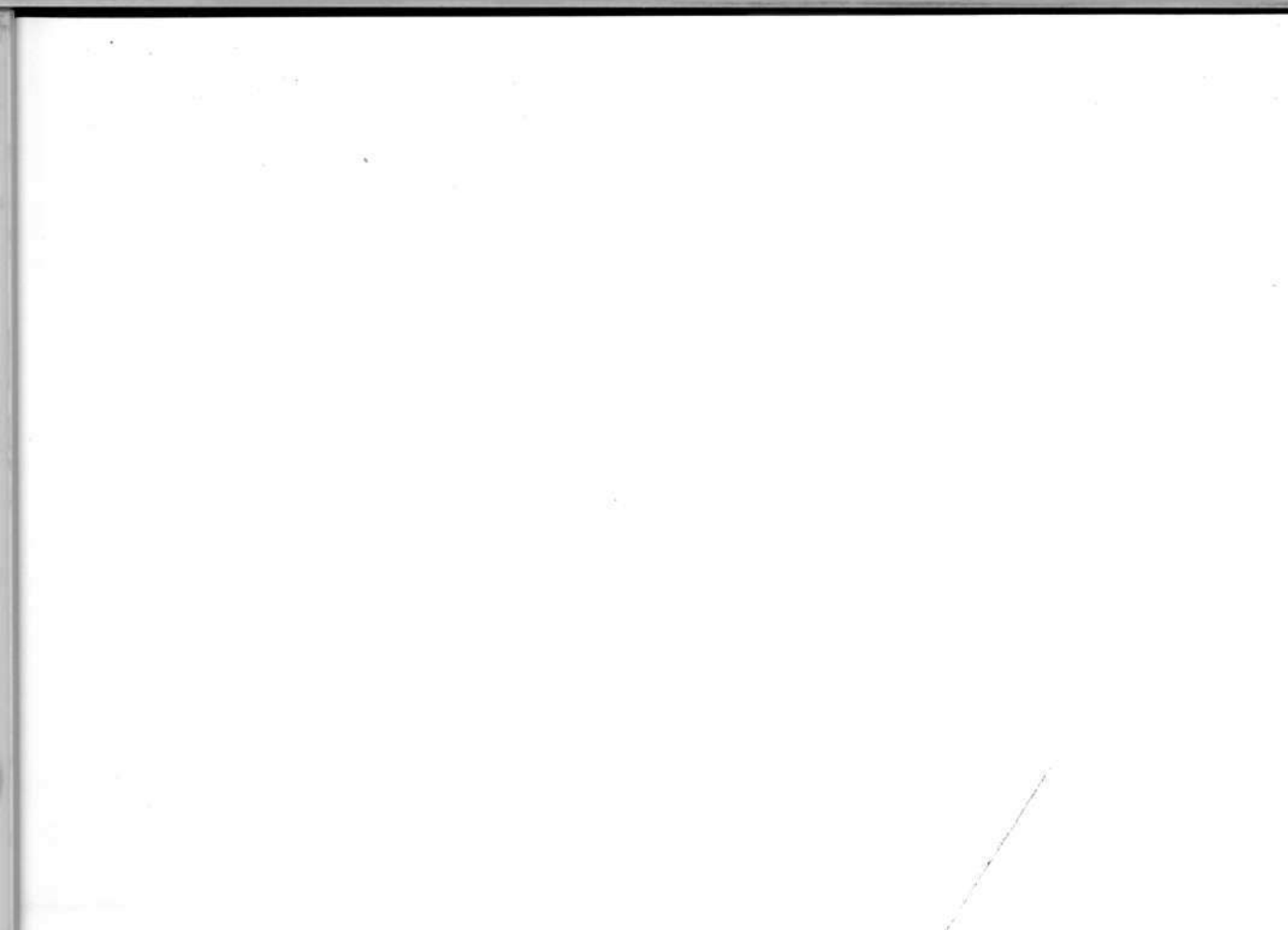
TRACERIES

10/01

MD SHPO

EAST ELEVATION

3 OF 3



INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC

THE ETZEL HOUSE

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

402 1/2 Railroad Ave. second

CITY, TOWN

Towson Md. 21204

VICINITY OF

Baltimore

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

COUNTY

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT☒ BUILDING(S)☒ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☒ PUBLIC☐ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☐ YES: RESTRICTED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☐ COMMERCIAL☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ GOVERNMENT☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ MILITARY☐ MUSEUM☐ PARK☒ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ RELIGIOUS☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ OTHER**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

John F. Etzel

Telephone #:

STREET & NUMBER

801 Starbit Court

CITY, TOWN

Towson Md. 21204

VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Baltimore County Courthouse

Liber #:

4581/435

Folio #:

STREET & NUMBER

401 Bosley Ave.

CITY, TOWN

Towson Md. 21204

STATE

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

BA-1071 - 402 1/2 Railroad

before 1915

This charming one-story frame cottage is the smallest house in the East Towson neighborhood. It's two bays wide by two bays deep.

CITY, TOWN

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

402½ RR

This one-story frame cottage is two bays wide by two bays deep. Its plan consists of one room across the west, or front, and two side-by-side rooms behind it. A stove flue rises at the intersection of the three rooms.

The western gable end of the house faces the street. The north bay contains a door sheltered by a simple shed-roofed hood. A 6/6 sash window above a window box occupies the south bay. The house is covered with wooden clapboards.

8 SIGNIFICANCE**PERIOD**

☐ PREHISTORIC
☐ 1400-1499
☐ 1500-1599
☐ 1600-1699
☐ 1700-1799
☐ 1800-1899
☐ 1900-

☐ ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC
☐ ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC
☐ AGRICULTURE
☐ ARCHITECTURE
☐ ART
☐ COMMERCE
☐ COMMUNICATIONS

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

☐ COMMUNITY PLANNING
☐ CONSERVATION
☐ ECONOMICS
☐ EDUCATION
☐ ENGINEERING
☐ EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT
☐ INDUSTRY
☐ INVENTION

☐ LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
☐ LAW
☐ LITERATURE
☐ MILITARY
☐ MUSIC
☐ PHILOSOPHY
☐ POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

☐ RELIGION
☐ SCIENCE
☐ SCULPTURE
☐ SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
☐ THEATER
☐ TRANSPORTATION
☐ OTHER (SPECIFY)

SPECIFIC DATES**BUILDER/ARCHITECT****STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Earliest records of deed indicates that John Finn leased the property to William Rodgers in 1892. Subsequent conveyances involved Clara Smith and James Smith who received the property from John Finn in 1901. Clara Smith and James Smith conveyed the property to Rufus Thompson in 1912, who later conveyed the property to Walter Cole in 1940.

Walter Cole conveyed the property to Leroy Haile, Real Estate broker. Leroy subsequently sold the property to its present owners John F. Etzel.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Marcus Pollock/coordinator Merry Stinson/architect

7/11/77

ORGANIZATION

Committee to Save E. Towson/Towson Ymca

DATE

823-8870

STREET & NUMBER

600 W. Chesapeake Ave.

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Towson Md. 21204

STATE

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RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 267-1438



BA-1071

Etzel House
402 1/2 R.R. Ave
Towson, Md.
west

Merry Stinson
1977